

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES	PRESENT: David Barclay (DB) Chair Melanie Smith (MS) Ian Lindsay (IL) Bob Kindness (BK) James Close (JC) Richard Greene (RG)	
DATE: 31 March 2016		
OPENED AT: 11.00 CLOSED AT: 15.35	APOLOGIES: Nigel Pearson (NP) Mark Williams (MW) Ewen Ballantyne (EB) Alasdair Macdonald (AM) Angus Davidson (AD)	
IN ATTENDANCE: Peter Cunningham (PC) Isabel Moore (IM) Veronica Mullaney (VM) Mary Gibson (MG) Peter Jarosz(PJ) Bill Whyte (BW)		

1. Minutes of Meeting on 16th December 2015

1.i The minutes of the meeting on 16th December were approved by IL, seconded by DB and confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

1.ii Matters Arising:

- Shieldaig lodge Hotel has fishing rights on the Badachro lochs but is not currently promoting fishing due to the difficulty of access. This may change should the hydro scheme go ahead.
- There is the potential for publicity regarding the future of FMOs through specific contacts with two media outlets - the BBC and Private Eye.
- WRF Ltd has been successful in their use of wrasse (that are caught locally) for sea lice control. A possible project to assess the sustainability of catching wrasse locally for use on their fish farms might be worth considering – WRF Ltd funding the project?

2. Meetings (DB) and Correspondence (PJ)

2.i DB reported that he had had further meetings with Dr. James Close (Gairloch High School) to develop educational ideas/projects.

2.ii DB would be lecturing at Ullapool High School in the near future and would promote Peter C's ideas for projects and cooperation.

2.iii BW, PJ and Craig MacIntyre (Argyll Fisheries Trust) had formulated, on behalf of ASFB, an input response to the Independent Consenting Review – a review instigated by SG and CE. Among the items dealt with, the issue of whether the local planning authority should remain the consenting authority was discussed. WRASFB/WRFT feel that it should remain with the local planning authority. There was also the issue of permanent planning consent with WRASFB/WRFT putting the case for ten-year term planning consents with a number of reasons including – in an environment that is commonly owned why should any one entity expect permanent planning consent? Why not synchronize planning consent with the CE lease term?

2.iv The Interactions Management Project meetings have been occurring for two years with no practical output to show for the meetings. As a result all the west coast fisheries' boards and trusts have withdrawn from the IMP until the aquaculture companies involved agree to specific conditions.

2.v PJ reported on the ASFB/RAFTS members meeting he attended at Battleby on 16th March. Boards' and Trusts' had been asked to make responses to RAFTS/ASFB regarding the draft FMO Bill. These responses were then collated and précised by RAFTS/ASFB as a discussion document for the meeting at Battleby. The format of the meeting was a workshop having some 7/8 tables with some 6 people around each table. A chairman (a RAFTS/ASFB representative) was allocated to each table and another person, at each table, took notes. Each of the items on the document was looked at and commented on with additional points made. There was an issue with the first three items (from the original response document) not being included in the discussion document. These were critical omissions and that point was forcibly made, (as it was in the earlier written response from WRFT/SFB) along with other important recommendations that were also added to these first three items.

2.vi On Monday 21st March, PJ met up with Chris Read (CR) of Marine Harvest Scotland (MH) at their Kyle of Lochalsh office. The issues for discussion were MH's problems at their farms in Loch Duich, Loch Torridon and Loch Ewe. CR spoke of a number of new innovative methods of treatments

using a new and bigger well boat that is due to arrive in the next week or two. These new treatments have been pioneered in Norway with, so far, significant results. One method is the use of fresh water passed through pipes that the fish pass through in less than 10 seconds. Not only is this method effective for sea lice dislodgement but it also counters AGD at the same time. The process collects all dislodged sea lice by filtering the water, collects all the filtered material that is then treated with H₂O₂, then dried on land and incinerated. Aquaculture's biggest on-cost is the treatment of sea lice, and there is little doubt that the efficacy of the medicinal treatments is fast diminishing because of the resistance to the treatments being built up by the sea lice. MH see these new non-medicinal treatments as a method of controlling sea lice whilst, at the same time, extending the time between the usage of medicinal treatments. This should allow the resistance of sea lice to these medicines to slowly diminish thus raising the efficacy of the medicines again. Two letters written by MH to WRASFB in 2011 offered a reduction in biomass both in Loch Duich and in Loch Torridon if further difficulty in controlling sea lice is experienced. PJ made CR aware of their content and stated that WRASFB would be holding MH to these offers of reducing biomass in these lochs should a similar sea lice disaster occur there any time from now on. Loch Ewe has already had its biomass reduced.

2.vii IL reported on a recent Skye Salmonid Management Group meeting involving the SFT, the SDSFB and Fish Farm Companies. Though the membership of the group is purely voluntary, it will nevertheless be bound by a Memorandum of Understanding. The meeting itself involved good open dialogue with exchange of data and there was further discussion on a possible collaborative project to sample sea lice at both farm and control sites. The management agreement was fully endorsed by Trust and Board.

2.viii On Tuesday 22nd March, PJ had a meeting with the aquaculture planning department (Colin Wishart (CW) and James Bromham (JB)) at the Highland Council (HC) offices (Glenhuquart Road, Inverness) during which a number of points were discussed:

- both CW and JB have taken voluntary redundancy (as part of the HC budget cut backs) and leave at the end of this month – that leaves just Dr Shona Turnbull (ST) as the only experienced aquaculture planning officer within HC. With the three planning officers in place, the department struggled to manage the number (and complexity) of aquaculture planning applications. This resultant situation (following the two departures) means that local (regional) planning officers will now manage new aquaculture planning applications, with ST being their source of specific information relating to aquaculture issues. We can expect aquaculture to take advantage of this situation.
- The continuing case for time limited planning consent was also mentioned and it was noted that one of the submissions that WRASFB made to the Independent Consenting Review pointed out that the marine environment is a common-owned asset and that the sea bed is a Crown Estate (CE) owned asset, access to which the CE offers fixed term leases to fish farms of 25 or 35 years. So why then does planning consent need to be permanent? It would seem quite logical to time limit the planning consent to the same term (or shorter) as the CE lease.
- The issue of Ardessie A was also discussed and it was made plain that the HC planning department were against any "legitimising" of the fish farm for continuing operation. Their view was quite clear – this site has never been fully EIA assessed through any planning process and therefore should not continue to operate. However it is far from clear just what decision, if any, the HC legal department will make. The site had its CE lease renewed for 25 years in 2015 and has since stocked with smolts though previously the site was used to bring in, grow on and harvest fish from Ardmair or Corrie.

2.ix With JC having to leave the meeting shortly, there followed a discussion regarding educational opportunities/connections – these included:

- The possible use of OPAL surveys.
- Learning to fish days.
- The development of the Angling Information Service App. WRFT will need to define the parameters that must include both biosecurity and fishing catch/unit effort. WRASFB could fund the App software platform.

2.x Following the notes (2.i to 2.x) in the minutes of our meeting on 16th December 2015, there were a number of meetings arranged/occurred with Simon McKelvey regarding a possible east/west FMO and detailed exchanges took place (with IL, DB and PJ attending). After fully examining this possible

FMO, the differences between the east's and the west's priorities/ambitions were quite obviously polar and such an amalgamation appeared to be rather for management reasons than for wild fish interests. Simon has been informed of our preferred FMO being a SFT/WRFT area. However, owing to the fact that the Scot/Gov may yet impose geographic boundaries (possibly east/west) thus taking choice out of the scenario, we did leave the "door open" for further discussions with Simon/Cromarty should the east/west FMO become an imposition from on high. It should be noted that we are not the only trust(s) thinking of an FMO based on an area that has unique problems/ambitions and that does not reach the so called "critical mass" brokered by ASFB. It is also worth recording that such preparations that we are currently making towards our preferred FMO (SFT/WRFT area) will be completely relevant for whatever route we are allowed to follow or for a route that is imposed on us.

3. FINANCIAL REPORTS

3.i The cash projections had been previously circulated by email and there were no queries regarding the finances shown on them. VM reported that the accounts were showing a gain for the financial year of between £10K to £14K.

The meeting accepted a proposal that the WRFT administrator's rate per hour and the WRASFB clerk's rate per hour should be the same figure. However, there had been no rise for either PC or PJ over the last couple of years, and DB stated that the trustees should also consider an inflation related pay rise for both PC and PJ – it was agreed that proposals could be circulated and agreed by email.

4. BIOLOGIST' REPORT

4.i PC's report had been circulated earlier by email. There is a need to "flesh out" the work programme for 2016 including educational projects and the trout loch study and then circulate that programme for comment. PC went through his report's main issues.

4.ii IM gave the meeting an update on the progress of her PhD project. She has some limited time for other field and educational work but generally her time for anything other than her PhD project is limited. Part of her project (the telemetry project) still requires some funding but approaches have been made for this funding and we are awaiting a decision from the possible funder.

5. Planning Ahead

5.i PJ mentioned that the Ghillies' Interviews project had received a very interested hearing at the Board's meeting of two days earlier with Hugh Whittle encouraging PJ to contact Guy Linley-Adams both for general interest and additional funding. There is an opportunity to write up these interviews (when they are finished) along with the Herring Fishermen's interviews (produced some two years ago) into an educational/historical booklet - possibly in collaboration with the Gairloch Heritage Museum and the Gairloch High School. Additionally the interviews, once ready for Two Lochs radio transmission, could then be offered to Radio Scotland for them to transmit as an informative radio programme making a much wider audience aware of the demise in both the marine and freshwater fisheries here in Wester Ross.

5.ii The Loch Maree project has identified a site on the shores of Loch Maree for the proposed building and a large amount of its timber construction will be able to be supplied by the Gairloch Estate. We now need to identify the legal structure of the partnership before we can progress the project. In particular the ownership of the building needs to somehow reflect community ownership if funding, for the actual building of it, is to be sourced from grants.

5.iii There will be an Open Day on 2nd June in the Torridon Village Hall to provide an insight into the work of SFT and WRFT. The audience will be targeted to include members of the press, aquaculture company personnel, officers from the regulators involved with both wild and farmed fish, Highland Council members and people from neighbouring boards and trusts.

5.iv MG stated that there is currently a consultation for a Harbour Porpoise SAC area that stretches from Lochinver in the north to Jura in the south but excludes a number of inner lochs including Inner Loch Torridon and Loch Gairloch.

5.v PJ reported that WRFT had successfully secured a further £15K from the Landfill Tax Credit fund (via EB Scotland) for the INNS project in the Loch Broom catchment area. This will allow additional eradication of Japanese Knotweed in that area and leave sufficient funds for the training up (and certification for stem injection work) of two volunteers for the continuing monitoring to keep any re-appearance of the JK in check.

5.vi The need for the formal amalgamation of the SFT and WRFT is a priority as the methodology is now clear – WRFT (as a charity formed by a Deed of Trust) will need to cease and its assets be transferred into the SFT (a charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee). The resultant board of

directors will need to reflect the differences in both assets and workload of the two trusts. Both the physical make up of the new board of directors as well as a Memorandum of Understanding will ensure these differences are accurately reflected. The resultant trust can then be re-named and all legal/compliance issues (should there be any) resolved.

5.vii The formation of an FMO is easier for trusts, rather than district salmon fishery boards, to achieve especially where there will be amalgamations of entities in order to achieve the desired FMO. Initial information filtering through regarding FMOs seemed to indicate top-heavy management structures – particularly when the possible east/west amalgamation was being looked at. With the now desired SFT/WRFT area as our FMO that is best suited to deliver the required objectives/outcomes (as so far outlined by SNG) as well as our on-going aspirations for our wild fish/fisheries, an initial costing of such an FMO and Fishery Trust unit could result in an annual budget of £237K being required. This figure is the result of costing all the work required to accomplish the outcomes required, employ a cut down version of the template staffing suggestions, and includes costing of work currently performed for the trust by volunteers. With the advent of FMOs and of a resultant levy version being applied to the southern rivers of the WRFT area, an estimate that includes the WRFT current income, the WRASFB current running costs, the SFT current income and the new levy income from the southern rivers would result in an annual income of only approximately 50% of the £237K. But whatever formation/organization the FMOs ultimately take there will be additional costs as there will be new management levels/responsibilities to take on as well as new opportunities. Once amalgamations have taken place there is an option to run the result as a “shadow FMO” simulating the structure that will be required and testing the viability of its operational functions. BW pointed out that the North Esk is currently running a “shadow FMO” and it is quite likely that their MD would be prepared to come to talk with us, detailing their FMO structure, their progress along this route and their resultant findings to date.

Action Points:

- We need to produce a comprehensive business plan for our desired FMO formation a.s.a.p.. This should be produced as a contract overseen by a “project panel” – made up of DB, IL, BW and PJ?
- We need to formally agree and action the paperwork for the SFT/WRFT amalgamation (*we have already formally agreed the amalgamation*).
- We need to produce a model, for our proposed FMO board membership composition – what percentage proprietors and what percentage of those representing different interests would be its make up so that it can become an approved body by SNG?
- This FMO would then be the scientific advisory arm of the new FMA with the resultant new Fishery Trust as its directed working partner.
- We need to produce a Fishery Management Plan (up-date both of the WRFT and SFT existing FMPs and merge the two?) that will encompass the outcomes that are required by SNG along with the aspirations of the new FMO.
- We need to inform Cromarty DSFB, also Andrew Wallace, of our proposed course of action, with the email and letter signed by DB on behalf of WRASFB, SDSFB, SFT and WRFT.

6. AOB

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	STATUS
23/06/2016	WRFT Office	11.00	Proposed
25/08/2016	WRFT Office	11.00	Proposed